

going, and hour after hour he ran along. Away up above the trees, the Dance of the Dead Men flickered, and once again two shadows pursued the hunter. But, intent upon the chase, he had little thought for other things.

Entering a thick grove of heavy timber, he paused for a moment to read the signs that told him where Spencer had camped for the night, where Gibeault had ransacked the furs, and where the two men had fought. Then on he sped. All night long he travelled, and all the following day.

Soon he noticed that he was gaining on the thief, for the track was constantly growing fresher. He realised now that it was only a matter of a few hours before he would overtake his quarry. The halfbreed's progress was becoming slower, since he had to go ahead now and beat a new track for the dogs to follow. Judging that he would come up with the thief that night, he had already left the hurry up sign upon several trees for his boys to see. He now blazed again; but with three cuts instead of two upon each tree, so that the boys would press forward faster. Farther on, as the signs of the thief grew fresher, he cut a long blaze and tore it off to let his sons know that he was now closer to his quarry, and expected to come upon him at any moment. To tell the boys how far he was ahead, and at what time he had passed, he drew a bow and arrow on the snow, with the tip of the arrow pointing in the direction of the sun at the time of making the blaze. To show that it was day time, he drew in front of the arrow a circle with rays radiating from the centre, to represent the sun. If it had been night time, he would have drawn a crescent moon.

With the coming of dusk, Standing Wolf increased his circumspection. Shortly after crossing a lake in the moonlight, he heard the barking of dogs ahead. He took hold of two saplings, one on either side of the track, and bent them over and fastened them together so that anyone following would have to stoop to pass under. This was a signal to the boys that danger was at hand, and for them to move forward warily and with their guns in readiness.

His advance became momentarily slower. It was more than an hour before he detected the glare of firelight ahead. He left the trail, and keeping to the lee of the fire lest the dogs should scent him, stealthily approached. The first glimpse of the dying fire showed him that all was still. The halfbreed lay wrapped in his hare skin robe upon a mattress of balsam brush. In the shelter of the undergrowth the dogs were curled in the snow, shivering still, though sound asleep.

Priming his gun afresh, Standing Wolf cocked it, and, silently stepping within the glare of the firelight, called upon Gibeault to surrender. The startled halfbreed sprang to his feet, and, seizing his ax, struck wildly at the Indian, who, in the very act of firing, leaped aside to save himself, and so missed his shot. Again the halfbreed swung his ax, and again Standing Wolf escaped the blow. Then, seeing his chance, he struck Gibeault with the butt of his gun and knocked him down. As he strove to rise, Standing Wolf dealt him a blow that stretched him motionless upon the snow. Stooping down, he felt the heart of the unconscious halfbreed. He was not dead. As Standing Wolf reloaded his gun, he pondered whether he should kill the thief or hand him over to the mounted police. Unable to decide, he bound him hand and foot, dragged him back upon the brush, and covered him with his robe.

Drawing the sleds nearer to the fire, he searched their loads, and found the silver fox skin in Gibeault's dunage bag. The sight increased his thirst for revenge. A

gust of wind blew the coals into feeble life again and reminded him that the fire was dying. He rose and chopped wood enough to last all the night through. Then he sat down to smoke and reflect upon the course he should pursue. The growling dogs, still bristling, slunk away to curl themselves up again on their frosty beds. The breeze, departing, left the trees motionless. All was still, save the ever flickering light of the Dance of the Dead Men far overhead. But Standing Wolf did not look toward the sky, for his mind was on the unconscious figure before him. Should he kill him now? Drawing his knife, he rose to do the deed; but a burning log rolled from the fire, and, sheathing his knife again, he thrust the stick into place. Then, squatting in the warmth of the fire, he fell to thinking. Hour after hour the night dragged through; pipe after pipe was smoked; until at last he began to drowse.

For sometime he slept. When, startled by the sound of movement, he awoke, he found the halfbreed glaring at him. Neither spoke. Again Standing Wolf added fuel to the coals; again he squatted beside the fire, with his gun across his knees, and watched his prisoner. Presently, the thief began struggling to free his hands, and, finding that the knots were too well tied, cursed Standing Wolf vilely. As the Indian heeded him not, the halfbreed grew tired of his profanity, and, rising to a sitting posture, snarled:

"Well, what do you intend to do with me?"

"Dog. I would not have your blood upon my knife; so will give you to the Red-coats," Standing Wolf replied.

Gibeault, growing defiant, scoffed at the idea of being taken to the police by Standing Wolf.

"It will be easy. My sons will be here in the morning," retorted the Indian.

For some time the halfbreed stared vacantly at the fire, as though rackin' his brains for some means of escape. He became disheartened at last, dropped back upon his couch, and fell asleep. Both men had travelled hard and fast, and were in sore need of rest. Soon Standing Wolf was attacked by an overpowering fit of drowsiness, and succumbed.

It was only for a brief time that he slept; yet, while he slept, he dreamed that he was travelling upon the spirit trail to join his departed friends in the Dance of the Dead Men. Awakening with a start, he caught sight of the brilliant, flickering glare of the northern lights above the treetops, and wondered how soon he should join in the dance up there.

Soon dawn began to break. The hills and rivers and lakes took shape. Still he lingered; for, with the coming of light, he thought of his youth, of the time when he was as young as the day, and he and his people were prosperous and happy, because all that vast region belonged to them. The remembrance kindled in his heart resentment against the white men. As he meditated upon the way in which they had wronged his people, how they had broken an endless trail of destruction across his country, and had left disease and starvation in their wake, he grew indignant toward them. Along with this feeling came an emotion of compassion for the thief, who, he remembered, was, after all, a half brother of his own people.

Just then he saw the boys coming out of the forest on the distant shore of the lake. So he hurried down the hill, harnessed the dogs to Spencer's sled, and, quietly cutting the bonds that held the sleeping thief, left him to his slumber and to his freedom.

When his sons met him on the lake beyond, they questioned him as to the fate of the thief: but Standing Wolf evasively replied:

"Last night he saw the Dance of the Dead Men."



Gibeault.

Drawn by Arthur Heming.